

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DPC 180

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS AND RADIO NEWS BRIEFING, FRIDAY,
AUGUST 31, 1962, 12:27 p.m.

MR. REAP: We will have for you later in the afternoon an address by Assistant Secretary Williams before the Michigan Food for Peace Council, Michigan State Fairgrounds, at Detroit. This is for use at one o'clock tomorrow.

That is all I have.

Q Joe, do you have any report of a Cuban firing on an American plane?

A No, I don't. I think you better ask the Pentagon about that.

Q Is it because you have no information?

A That is it; yes.

Q Have you reason to believe there would be any information available?

A If there is anything at all to that, they will know about it better than I here.

Q You are assuming, then, that it's a military plane that was fired on?

A Why do I have to assume that? [Laughter]

Q Well, you are referring us to the Pentagon.

A I am referring you to the Pentagon, yes.

Q Are they in charge of all firing?

Q They are in charge of all planes being shot at, aren't they? [Laughter]

Q Has there been any change in the Peruvian Ambassador's position? I mean the American Ambassador to Peru?

A No, Mr. Loeb is still here on consultation.

Q What are Rusk's plans for the weekend? Is he staying in town, or--

A As far as I am aware of.

Q Is he coming here tomorrow or Monday?

A I don't know whether he will be in tomorrow.

Q Who are you talking about?

A The Secretary. I think just about every Saturday he is in Washington he does come in.

Q Joe, it seems that there is some danger in Algeria that people are going to shoot at one another again. I am just wondering whether the State Department, in line with its traditional role as peace-keeper, was trying to do anything about it.

A I am sure that Bill Porter, our man on the scene, will do anything he thinks profitable to do, to avoid that. We, of course, would deplore any shooting again. I should think that the people of Algeria have

had their fill of shooting, after what has been going on in the past several years there.

I can give you some information about aid to Algeria, if that will be useful.

Q Again? We had it three times. It's the same amounts, same--?

Q Is this the same as the press release issued by the AID Agency yesterday?

A Essentially.

Q We carried it twice already.

A Well, we won't make you carry it three times.

Q What is this now?

A My colleagues here, or your colleagues here say they have gotten all the information that I have from a Food for Peace press release.

Q Well, is your information the same?

A Approximately.

Q What differences are there? [Laughter]

A I don't have the Food for Peace press release here. It was just an effort to give you some news. I am sorry I have come in empty-handed.

Q Can you describe the nature of the US approach to the NATO countries about the Soviet Union

using NATO ships, NATO country ships to send things to Cuba? Did they ask to stop it, or what is supposed to be the nature of it?

A Well, as I told you yesterday, we have for some time and we continue to discuss at NATO capitals the problem of Cuba, and particularly trading with Cuba. But beyond that, I am afraid I can't be specific.

Q Joe, have you anything on it since yesterday? I believe somebody asked you if you would specify which countries, which flags were doing this, and to what extent.

A No, I cannot say which flags, which nations are involved. But I can point out to you now that while we do have authority under our laws to prevent shipping going into certain areas, there has been no prohibition--

Q You mean a blockade?

A --to American ships to go into Cuba.

Q Are you talking about a blockade now?

A No. No. No, there is no blockade.

Q Well, you said you have authority to prevent them going into certain--

A Prevent our own ships, I meant prevent American ships.

Q Oh.

A But, as a matter of fact, no American ships are going into Cuban ports. Now, this does not apply to planes, because I understand Pan American is still flying in and out.

Q Well, does this apply to ships that might be flying, say, the Panamanian flag, owned by Americans?

A It's only American ships now. I am not sure, Howard, quite frankly--I will get lost on this, flags-of-convenience matter. That is very confused, who owns the ship, where it is registered, etc. That is very complex.

Q Well, I heard from our waterfront reporter, actually, where the information came from, that the trouble, the reason they are so disturbed is that many of these ships are actually American-owned ships flying other flags, carrying stuff to Cuba.

A That I don't know.

Q But I didn't get your first statement, that there is no prohibition for American ships. There is?

A No, American ships are not prohibited by our laws from going into Cuban ports.

Q They could go, but none are going?

A Let me say, on background, they are

prohibited from going into Red China and those portions of Viet Nam and Korea which are under Communist domination. Those are the only areas I know.

Q Joe, under what authority are these ships restricted in going to the other areas; that is, could our shipping be barred from Cuba by an Executive Order?

A Let me say this on background, because I am not entirely sure of it: The earlier order barring ships from going into Red China was issued by the Commerce Department in October, I think October 30, 1958, pursuant to authority in the National Defense Act.

But if you wish to be precise about that, I think you better ask the Commerce Department about it. Those orders I understand were made public at the time.

Q Yes. I am just wondering what would have to be done in the case of Cuba.

Q Joe, on another phase of this Cuban program, there have been widespread reports that Russian ships are unloading arms there and that the last information I got on it was that some had unloaded and some were en route.

Can you give us, for background or any other way, what information you have on the status of this operation?

A Well, I am actually not up to date on this. My information is some several days old now. I have confirmed to you that a number of passenger ships and a number of cargo ships have entered Cuban ports. There are others on the way.

Q Are these Russian ships you are talking about?

A These are essentially Soviet and bloc ships. But I think most of them are Soviet's. And they have been delivering cargoes, electronics equipment, mobile generators. There is some military hardware, communications equipment. Does that help?

Q Well, have the ones that--have the ones unloaded that were last reported en route, or--

A John, I don't know how to answer that. I don't know how to answer that.

Q I am just trying to get a progress report.

A Maybe I can up-date my information later.

Q I'ts an open secret that attorney Donovan is trying to rescue the prisoners, not with money, but with food and drugs, medicines. And apparently the plan is to buy American surplus food. Will, in that case, American ships be prohibited to deliver that food?

A I have already said that there is no

restriction on American shipping going into Cuba. I don't quite know what you mean by an "open secret" about Mr. Donovan. It has been in the papers, his efforts, for some time.

I told you, some of you, last week that Mr. Donovan had come in and asked that his passport be validated for travel to Cuba, and it was done. You also should know that there are no restrictions on the Cubans buying American foodstuffs, nor medical supplies.

Q When did Donovan have his passport validated?

A Last Friday afternoon, as I recall.

Q Well, it does not require special permission for American citizens to travel to Cuba, does it?

A Yes, it does.

Q It does?

A Yes. Passports are marked "not valid for travel to Cuba," among other parts of the world.

Q Mine isn't.

A Yours has been validated properly, John, and I can assure you that it was done with the approval of the Press Office here, and any of you who would like to go to Cuba--I'd be glad to facilitate your passport.

[Laughter]

Q Thank you, Joe.

[The meeting was concluded at
12:40 p.m.]